

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP
IMPROVING ACQUISITION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
DEVELOPMENT

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey C. Sobel is an acquisition program manager for the U.S. Air Force and is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from Syracuse University in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering, the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1995 with a Master's of Art in Anthropology, and the Air Command and Staff College in 2005 with a Master's in Military Operational Art and Science. He has over 21 years of experience in both acquisition and intelligence operations. He served as a Detachment Commander in South Korea for Space Surveillance and was a Squadron Commander responsible for the development of the Small Diameter Bomb II. Upon graduation from Air War College, he will move to a Senior Materiel Leader position at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.



Abstract

The current Air Force method for developing junior to mid-level acquisition program officers is inadequate to prepare them to manage the complexities of today's large, government acquisition programs. To understand the problem, this paper begins by examining the results from the 2009 *Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Study on Program Manager Training and Experience*.¹ Using a training strategy called "learn-do-teach," this paper identifies the strengths and weaknesses in the current Air Force acquisition leader development process. To improve program manager training, this paper recommends adjusting the current training strategy and proposes a decentralized learning framework that includes expanded experiential education and mentorship within the work environment. Dubbed the "Next Generation Leadership" program, this framework focuses on leadership development for junior to mid-level program managers.

As envisioned, this program would consist of two components, an Undergraduate Program Management (UPM) Apprenticeship and a Mentor/Teach Program. UPM Apprenticeship uses the current acquisition career field education and training plan, adjusts the current evaluation system, and expands workforce awards, creating an improved experiential learning environment for program managers. Similarly, the Mentor/Teach Program leverages the existing Air Force Mentorship Program to ensure young program managers are matched with experienced senior leaders. Mentor/Teach requires junior members to demonstrate their knowledge through teaching. The Next Generation Leadership program I propose is designed to fill the gaps in existing training and ensure junior to mid-level program managers have the experiential training necessary to successfully lead large government acquisition programs.

Introduction

Program Managers are hired to deliver projects within cost, schedule, and performance. Within the Department of Defense (DoD), government program managers have the added responsibilities to navigate government regulations as well as politics to be successful. Like most endeavors, the training and experience of government program managers directly impacts the success of their programs. However, the current Air Force method for developing junior to mid-level acquisition program managers is inadequate to prepare them to manage the complexities of today's large, government acquisition programs. In a recent 2012 example, the Air Force cancelled the Expeditionary Combat Support System (ECSS) after spending seven years and one billion dollars. In an interview with *Air Force Times*, Brigadier General Kathryn Johnson, the Air Force's director of system integration, "listed five major causes behind the ECSS failure, including the Air Force's lack of a master schedule."² The master schedule is one of the fundamental documents for program success as it synchronizes the efforts of the government and contractor teams. How could something as basic as a master schedule be missed in a major acquisition program? To understand the problem, this paper begins by examining the results from the *2009 OSD Study on Program Manager Training and Experience*.³ Next, this paper introduces and explains the "learn-do-teach" training strategy as a means to explore the strengths and weaknesses in the current development of junior to mid-level acquisition program managers. Using concepts from the "learn-do-teach" strategy, this paper proposes that the current training strategy needs adjustment and recommends a framework that includes expanded experiential education and mentorship within the work environment as necessary components to improve program manager training. The benefits and the need for this shift in training strategy are presented at the conclusion of the paper. In today's fiscally constrained environment it is

imperative that we leverage every opportunity to improve the experience and expertise of our acquisition program managers so they can successfully lead and deliver their weapon systems to the warfighter.

The State of Program Management Development

In 2009, at the request of Mr David Ahern, OSD Director, Portfolio Systems Acquisition, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) conducted a study of program manager training and experience. “Mr Ahern requested that the study be based on interviews of Acquisition Category (ACAT) I and II program managers to determine whether DoD is “teaching program managers the right things” and to identify any opportunities to improve the proficiency of program managers through (1) additional training or improvements in training and/or (2) additional experience requirements for program manager candidates.”⁴ The study consisted of interviews with 55 program managers or program executive officers (PEOs) and included a mix of military and civilians. The grade ranges of the interviewees were between O-6 (Colonel) and O-9 (Lieutenant General).⁵ “To enable the study team to understand where the training of program managers was and was not sufficient, the team prepared a list of 22 generic challenges program managers encounter on major acquisition programs.”⁶

The candid interviews yielded “six hundred observations...and one hundred or more recommendations...” and “described the strengths and opportunities for improvements in acquisition training and preparatory experiences.”⁷ Combining through this information, the study team grouped the findings into three general areas: (1) Topics of Training, (2) Methods of Training, and (3) Acquisition Experience and Careers.⁸ While the study identified that “DAU courses are strong contributors to program manager acquisition knowledge and skill,” all three general areas called for more experience, either in specific areas such as contracting and finance

or in general experience such as industry practices to “deal with the challenges encountered in managing major acquisition programs.”⁹ In addition to more experience, the report specifically highlighted the need for “mentors and senior advisory teams to assist them [program managers] in dealing with particularly complex challenges on major acquisition programs.”¹⁰ These concerns are not new and the efforts to improve acquisition training are discussed next.

Improvement Efforts

Efforts to improve acquisition development have been ongoing for over 20 years. In 1991, Congressman Nicholas Mavroules noted, “Defense acquisition reform is a perennial topic in Washington, D.C.”¹¹ In that same year, Congress enacted the *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act* (DAWIA) as part of the Fiscal Year 1991 National Defense Authorization Act to create “a professional acquisition work force and corps within each of the military services and defense agencies.”¹² The formation of DAU was an outgrowth of DAWIA and represented a major step in consolidating and standardizing the development of the acquisition workforce. In a 1997 follow-up study on DAWIA, published in the *Acquisition Review Quarterly*, the authors concluded progress to improve acquisition was being made and that “each Component (service) we interviewed was genuinely concerned about its acquisition workforce.”¹³

The commitment to improve the force continues today. With the increasing budget demands, DoD acquisition leadership began to chart a new course with the *Implementation Directive for Better Buying Power (BBP)* released in November 2010.¹⁴ In the subsequent update *BBP 2.0*, released in November 2012, OSD expanded the original five initiatives to seven. These initiatives are: (1) Achieve Affordable Programs; (2) Control Costs Throughout the Product Lifecycle; (3) Incentivize Productivity and Innovation in Industry and Government; (4) Eliminate Unproductive Processes and Bureaucracy; (5) Promote Effective Competition; (6)

Improve Tradecraft in Acquisition of Services; and (7) Improve the Professionalism of the Total Acquisition Workforce.¹⁵

Initiative seven reaffirms the need to improve the acquisition workforce. In an attachment to *BBP 2.0*, Dr. Frank Kendall, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (OSD/AT&L) states, “This new category [initiative seven] emphasizes the most important single factor in the performance of the Defense Acquisition System: the capability of the professionals in our workforce, particularly the key leaders who implement the system and develop the people who will follow them.”¹⁶ By adding this seventh initiative, OSD policy makers reaffirmed their commitment to improve development.

Acquisition development is significantly better than it was 20 years ago. But as the 2009 study indicates, there is still more work to be done. For example, to address the need for more experience in the workforce, the 2009 study states the following in the recommendation section: “Introducing practical applications and exercises in courses is likely to require DAU supervisors and faculty who have the time and the interest to regularly visit program offices in the field, learn first-hand the challenges program managers encounter, and bring realistic case materials and lessons learned back to the classroom.”¹⁷ While well intentioned, two key points should be noted in the wording of this recommendation. First, the words “who have the time” should cause one to pause. Developing new exercises for in-class instruction takes both time and money. With today’s fiscally constrained budget, finding both the time and the money may be more difficult than expected. Second, and more importantly, the words “in courses” to bring “back to the classroom” indicate a predisposition that the DAU model is skewed towards academic training. At the heart of the recommendation, it is basically doing more of the same in-class training we have done in the past. Based on past performance, this is unlikely to bring the

required improvements that will aide developing program managers. To quote Albert Einstein's definition of insanity, it is "doing the same thing over again and expecting different results."¹⁸ Making improvements on how we develop program managers, requires that we explore new training strategies.

The "Learn-Do-Teach" Training Strategy

Learning is finding out what you already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers, and teachers.

- Richard Bach
Illusions

The "learn-do-teach" training strategy draws from a number of philosophies within the field of education. For this paper, "learn" is defined as the traditional academic instruction where students are taught or given information from a teacher. Learning in this case includes both classroom education as well as on-line education, with the key characteristic that information and knowledge are given in a one-way direction, from teacher (or virtual teacher) to student. The definition of "do" draws its roots from constructivism learning theory. In constructivism, "Learners are believed to be encultured into their learning community...through their interaction with the immediate learning environment."¹⁹ In simple terms, "do" is experiential learning: hands-on, practical experience in the workplace. Finally, the concept of "teach" for this paper is best defined by the education philosophy of learning by teaching where students teach others what they know to solidify their knowledge.

The fundamental concept behind the "learn-do-teach" (L-D-T) strategy is to combine each of these three distinct activities into one framework that best imparts and solidifies knowledge within the student. Ideally, once imbued with this knowledge, the student is better able to lead effectively within their chosen profession. Figure 1 provides a graphic depiction of

the “learn-do-teach” strategy as envisioned by Business Analyst, Erik Jul.²⁰ In his illustration he includes “lead” in the center of his Venn diagram, indicating this is the result of the continuous training strategy. The current DoD program manager certification process is presented next in preparation for a comparison between the DAU and the L-D-T training strategies. Applying a L-D-T training strategy for developing program managers will help better prepare them to lead complex defense acquisition programs.

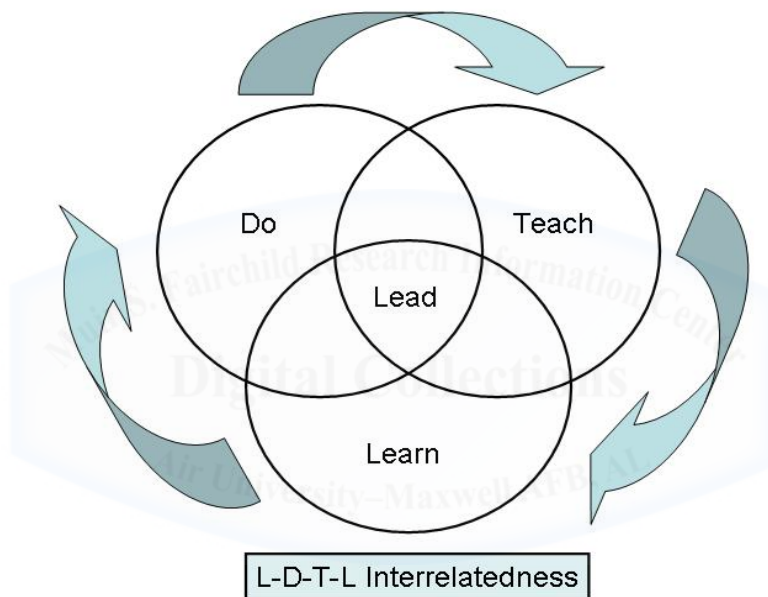


Figure 1: Learn-Do-Teach-Lead, (Reprinted from Erik Jul, “Transformative Personal and Organizational Development,” <http://erikjul.wordpress.com/2010/05/04/l-d-t-l-cycle/>, last accessed 11 January 2013.)

Acquisition Development and Certification

Beginning with the Defense Systems Management School in 1971 and through consolidation with 11 other Service schools, the DAU was formed in 2000.²¹ According to the brief history of DAU, it “was created as a result of the critical necessity, identified in high-level studies and legislation, for providing the Department of Defense Acquisition, Technology and

Logistics workforce with a professional career path and consistency of training content and opportunity.”²² Today’s certification standards represent the culmination of over 40 years of sustained focus on the development of acquisition professionals.

An officer’s certification from DAU is one of the key considerations in choosing program managers to lead complex, government acquisition programs. For the program management career field, these certifications are divided into three levels. Each of these levels has a set of core certification requirements which are a combination of acquisition training, functional training, education, and experience.²³ Figure 2 shows the Level I core certification standards. In addition to core certification standards, each level has a set of desired training, education, and experience. Additionally, Figure 2 includes “Core Plus” requirements and shows which type of job assignment the courses are best suited.

Core Certification Standards (Required for DAWIA certification.)				
Acquisition Training	▶ ACQ 101 Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management			
Functional Training	▶ SYS 101 Fundamentals of Systems Planning, Research, Development, and Engineering ▶ CLB 007 Cost Analysis ▶ CLB 016 Introduction to Earned Value Management			
Education	▶ Formal education not required for certification			
Experience	▶ 1 year of acquisition experience			

Core Plus Development Guide (Desired training, education, and experience.)		Type of Assignment			
Training		Wpn Sys	Services	Bus Mgt/IT	Intern Acq
CLC 011 Contracting for the Rest of Us		✓	✓	✓	
CLE 025 Information Assurance (IA)		✓	✓	✓	
CLI 001 International Armaments Cooperation (IAC), Part 1					✓
CLI 002 International Armaments Cooperation (IAC), Part 2					✓
CLI 003 International Armaments Cooperation (IAC), Part 3					✓
CLL 008 Designing for Supportability in DoD Systems		✓	✓		
CLL 011 Performance Based Life Cycle Product Support (PBL)		✓	✓		
CLM 017 Risk Management		✓	✓	✓	
IRM 101 Basic Information Systems Acquisition		✓	✓	✓	
LOG 101 Acquisition Logistics Fundamentals		✓	✓		
PQM 101 Production, Quality, and Manufacturing Fundamentals		✓	✓		
SAM 101 Basic Software Acquisition Management		✓		✓	
TST 102 Fundamentals of Test and Evaluation		✓			
Education					
▶ Baccalaureate degree, preferably with a major in engineering, systems management, or business administration					
Experience					
▶ One (1) acquisition experience (in addition to core certification experience)					

Figure 2: Level I Program Management Certification Requirements (Reprinted from Defense Acquisition University, "Certification Guide - PM Level I," <https://dap.dau.mil/career/pmt/Pages/Certification.aspx> (accessed 12 January 2013).

Certification is defined as the “confirmation that some fact or statement is true through the use of documentary evidence.”²⁴ Program Management certification, then, is designed to document that a program manager has completed the right training, has the right education, and the right experience to effectively lead acquisition programs. As a result, certification standards also act as a guide, or a strategy, to ensure proper training. The following section compares the current acquisition development strategy, as reflected by certification requirements, to the “Learn-Do-Teach” training strategy outlined above.

Acquisition Development and The Learn-Do-Teach Training Strategy

At first glance, it is easy to see that some of the certification activities clearly map to the L-D-T training strategy. For example, in the “learn” category there are many courses required to train program managers the necessary skills for their job. Based on the number of courses and the specificity, it is evident that DAU puts an emphasis on providing learning through coursework as a key factor in its strategy for developing program managers. In the “do” category, certification requires experience. However a major weakness in the current method of certifying experience is that it is measured by months in an acquisition assignment and gives no specifics as to what *kind* of experience a developing program manager should gain during this time. For example, in order to complete Level I Program Management, the certification requirement is one year of acquisition experience. For Level II, the criteria is two years of acquisition experience, with one year in program management. Level III is slightly more specific, requiring four years of acquisition experience, with two of those years in a program office and at least 1 year in a program management position with cost, schedule, and performance responsibilities.²⁵ Unlike the specificity provided for coursework, the experience criteria is very broad and does not define specific standards as to what experience should be

gained during the time required. Finally, by comparison to the L-D-T strategy, there is no DAU process aimed at “teaching” as part of program manager development. It is clear that the DAU development strategy puts the greatest emphasis on coursework, followed by experience, and does not require a program manager to demonstrate knowledge by teaching what they know. While this is an interesting note, the more important question is, “Is the DAU development strategy effective?” The 2009 OSD study discussed above indicates it is not. As a result, the DAU training strategy must be adjusted to better align with L-D-T to fix the experience gaps noted in the study.

Adjusting the DAU Training Strategy

In order to effectively train future acquisition leaders, the DAU training must better balance the three components of the L-D-T training strategy. As a result of the consolidation required by DAWIA, the training and certification processes within DAU understandably shifted towards a centralized system. This resulted in more standardized classroom and on-line training; a strength of the DAU system. Therefore, no adjustment is necessary to the “Learn” portion of the DAU model. However, the training strategy needs to focus on the “Do” and “Teach” aspects of the model. The current centralized construct lacks an equally robust decentralized training strategy to provide experiential learning in the workplace and to complete acquisition leader education. The importance of decentralization in today’s environment is the fundamental message in the 2012 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mission Command White Paper.²⁶

In General Dempsey’s White Paper, he notes “Mission Command must be institutionalized and operationalized into all aspects of the joint force -- our doctrine, *our education, our training*, and our manpower and personnel processes” (emphasis added).²⁷ Mission Command, as defined by Joint Publication 3-0, is “the conduct of military operations

through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders.”²⁸ As a fundamental building block to improve the DAU training model, we need to include a decentralized learning component into our training. In order to avoid the costs of DAU faculty traveling to collect data, building courses, then paying for students to travel and attend these courses, acquisition leadership must create learning opportunities in the workplace where program managers reside. Based on these concepts, the next section outlines my proposed solution entitled the “Next Generation Leader.”

Next Generation Leadership program

The “Next Generation Leader” (NGL) program I propose augments the existing, centralized, DAU training strategy. As the title suggests, the term “Next Generation” is aimed at junior to mid-level program managers who are developing their program management skills. Specifically it targets military officers in the rank of Captain through Lieutenant Colonel. Similarly, the focus on the civilian side is GS-11 through GS-14. The focus on these grades provides junior program managers with the appropriate leadership and experiential skills necessary as they develop into senior program management roles. The NGL program contains two components aimed at increasing the “do” and “teach” aspects of the L-D-T training strategy. Both of these components are focused on development opportunities within the workplace environment. The first component is an experiential based program called the Undergraduate Program Management Apprenticeship (UPM Apprenticeship). The second component is an expanded mentorship program which combines an aspect of teaching to form a Mentor/Teach Program. Figure 3 below shows the L-D-T Venn diagram and represents how the NGL program augments existing DAU training. The concepts behind each of the two components are explained in the next section of the paper.

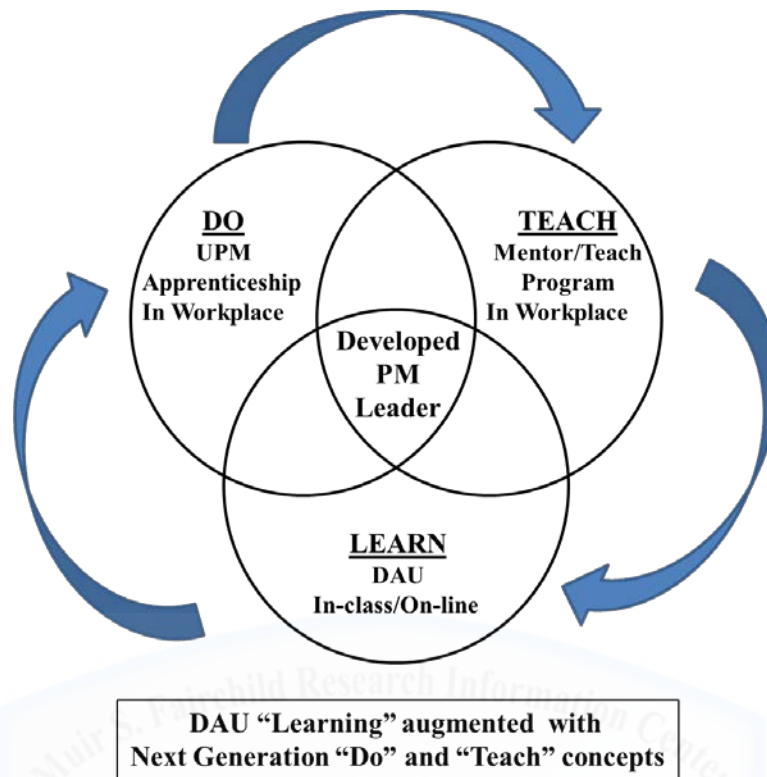


Figure 3: L-D-T PM Development Strategy

Next Generation Leader Component 1: UPM Apprenticeship

The UPM Apprenticeship component is focused on experiential “doing” in the workplace. Modeled in some ways off the Air Force’s Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT), it blends DAU in-class or on-line training with hands on, practical experience. Much like UPT is a blend of classroom and cockpit training, UPM is designed to move the developing program manager beyond classroom exercises. Starting a UPM Apprenticeship program is easier than might be expected as the foundation is already embodied in the Acquisition Managers Career Field Education and Training Program (CFETP).²⁹

Updated in August 2012, the CFETP “provides the framework and guidance necessary for planning, developing, managing, and conducting the career field training program.”³⁰

Although the CFETP states, “supervisors must use this CFETP to ensure Acquisition Managers receive training and skill-enhancing experience at appropriate states in their development,” the guide is often only used for newly assessed program managers.³¹ There are a number of reasons why the CFETP framework is overlooked as a continuing development tool. First, from a compliance perspective, the CFETP directs that “completion of the core tasks on the Unit Training Task Lists are mandatory through the grade of Captain / GS-12 (or equivalent)” and that these plans are items for inspection in a Unit Compliance Inspection.³² This guidance emphasizes training our junior officers and by default ignores a large number of middle acquisition leaders. The second reason the CFETP is overlooked for middle tier leaders is that they are often “catching up” on completing certification courses, having just returned to acquisitions after a career broadening assignment. These officers are busy getting DAU course training and additional experience-based training is often overlooked. Therefore, the first step in implementing the UPM Apprenticeship program is to reinvigorate the use of the CFEPT and expand the application of the CFEPT to mid-level developing program managers.

Ensuring the CFEPT gets the attention it requires demands a cultural change. This cultural change can be jumpstarted through both the appraisal and awards system. Program Executive Officers (PEOs) and their subordinate Senior Materiel Leaders (SML) must take a more active approach in tracking mid-level force compliance with the CFETP program. This approach should include strengthening evaluation factors in the civilian appraisal or Officer Performance Reports to include experiential development of their subordinates. This type of evaluation factor is already embodied in the Executive Performance Agreement for civilian Senior Executive Service (SES).³³ Creating the required cultural change means these behaviors must be evaluated early in a supervisor’s career. This change should begin at the rank of Major,

as part of the transition from Company Grade to Field Grade Officer. Additionally, the awards process must be adjusted. Presently, OSD/AT&L sponsors the annual Workforce Development Award which “recognizes organizations that have made exemplary contributions to the career-long development of their workforces.”³⁴ Awards similar to the Development Award should be considered for individuals at lower echelons within the Air Force on a bi-annual basis. These awards will increase the importance of career development within the workplace. The intent of adjusting the evaluation and award systems is to increase the emphasis on developing program managers within their workplace as part of a supervisors responsibilities. Reinvigorating the CFETP, adjusting the evaluation system, and including individual workforce awards are three pieces necessary to create the UPM program. The following section outlines the second NGL component, the Mentor/Teach Program.

Next Generation Leader Component 2: Mentor/Teach Program

Just like the UPM component described above, the Mentor/Teach component is designed to take place in the workplace. Focused on the “teach” aspect of the L-D-T learning strategy, Mentor/Teach is a two-part teaching strategy. The first part, Mentor, is directly rooted in the existing Air Force Instruction 36-3401, *Air Force Mentoring*.³⁵ With this firm foundation already in place, application only requires acquisition leadership emphasis. The second part, Teach, requires active participation by the developing program manager to teach peers in the workplace. It is especially useful to augment on-line learning, as it creates student accountability in demonstrating knowledge of the material. Combining mentoring and teaching creates an environment where experiences are shared and knowledge solidified by demonstrating mastery of the information.

Mentoring in the Mentor/Teach Program

Many mentorship programs were developed across the Air Force since publication of the Air Force Mentorship Program Instruction in June 2000. This instruction defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.”³⁶ While not mandatory, mentor relationships are established through formal match processes or by natural affinity between individuals. Mentor relationships are defined in many ways, but one of the most common perceptions is that a mentor helps you with your career planning and career advancement. For example, the CFETP specifies “as an O-3/O-4 or GS 12/13 (or equivalent), the acquisition manager is expected to nurture new acquisition managers in their career development.”³⁷ Unfortunately the terms career development and career advancement are often used interchangeably. In the NGL program, mentorship must be better defined and modeled more closely to DAU’s Executive Coaching program.

Typically reserved for PEO’s and SML’s, Executive Coaching is defined as “Enabling improved acquisition outcomes by leveraging the skills and the energy of the one being coached while also developing their capability.”³⁸ At the request of a senior program manager, DAU matches an executive coach (usually a retired SML or PEO) to assist the program manager with a specific, acquisition issue. The important part to take away from this model is that it has two components - it is focused at an ongoing (not theoretic) problem in the workplace environment and it is focused on developing the one being coached. Not everyone needs a coach, and certainly not one at an executive level, but this mindset of coaching within the program office, specifically aimed at developing program managers, needs to be applied at the more junior levels. It combines both the sharing of lessons learned while providing the kind of hands-on,

practical experience necessary to develop program managers. This is the aspect of mentorship that must be captured in the CFETP direction as part of the Mentor/Teach Program.

Teaching in the Mentor/Teach Program

Joachim Grzega from the University of Eichstatt in Germany provides one of the most concise descriptions of learning by teaching. Grzega states, “The fundamental principle is to hand over as much teaching responsibility to the learner as possible and to encourage as many students as possible to engage in the highest possible degree of activity. The team of students placed in charge of the lesson must think of appropriate teaching methods to convey their topic (i.e. chalk and talk teaching, working in pairs, group work, discussion, etc.). The role of the teacher consists in preparing, supporting, moderating and supervising.”³⁹ The in-residence courses taught at DAU already have components of learning by teaching. Students have assigned presentations based on exercises and they are free to build those presentations as they see fit. DAU faculty provides feedback and guidance on those presentations. In higher level DAU courses, students are given opportunities to share their experience and present their own topics as time permits. But for the lower, entry level courses, nearly all the instruction has moved to on-line training. With the exception of the end of course, multiple-question test, there is no other accountability method to ensure learning is taking place. A key aspect of the Mentor/Teach Program in NGL is to include some process for learning accountability for our on-line training.

Online training has numerous advantages. The most obvious advantages are the consistency in training, the ability to reach a wide audience, and the automated tracking measures to ensure training is completed. As a result, the amount of on-line training required annually continues to grow. Unfortunately, as a result of poorly designed training, slow network

speeds, and the lack of dedicated training time, many users of on-line training try to minimize the time spent by quickly “clicking” through the training. The result of this practice has undermined the value of the training. One potential way to improve the accountability from on-line training is to have one member teach what they have learned from the training in a small group setting. This method would require more preparation by the student teacher, but if designed to be accomplished on a rotational basis, the preparation workload would balance out between unit members. This method of on-line instruction, combined with first person teaching, would increase the level of desired learning and facilitate interaction between unit members.

There are two unique impacts to having students teach what they are learning. First, many studies show increased retention of material when a student is required to teach what they have learned. In Stephen R. Covey’s book, *The 8th Habit, From Effectiveness to Greatness*, he advises to teach at least two people what you have studied and learned.⁴⁰ He notes “Those who teach what they are learning are, by far, the greatest students.”⁴¹ The second benefit of unit teaching is the social interaction between unit members. In today’s environment, we have fewer opportunities to interact with peers within or across units and this teaching strategy creates those opportunities.

Benefits of The Next Generation Leader Program

The rationale for developing the NGL program is to augment existing, well-designed courses provided by DAU. The UPM Apprenticeship and Mentor/Teach programs bring training back into the work environment to provide more practical experience and increase the sharing of lessons learned between members of the acquisition workforce. Many of the aspects of the NGL already exist in the form of the CFETP and Mentor programs. NGL is intended to pull these

various pieces into one framework under the L-D-T training strategy to improve the development of program managers.

Senior leaders recognize the importance of training and the need to make improvements. In the 2013, Chief of Staff of the Air Force vision, General Welsh notes, “Education and training are the foundation of our airpower advantage...We will maximize our Airmen's potential by refining our development programs to move beyond classroom-based instruction and incorporating leading-edge educational concepts. Through a personalized, career-long building block approach, we will eliminate duplicative and extraneous training, returning valuable time to our Airmen. We will also integrate our development, promotion, and assignment processes to recognize excellence and grow Airmen to have the breadth, knowledge, and capabilities to serve where our Nation needs them.”⁴² The NGL Program is a step towards implementing a decentralized training environment focused on fixing the documented need for more experiential training as we develop leaders within program management.

Implementing NGL will require a cultural change. Today, many program managers rely on training from DAU to satisfy their career development. With NGL, the focus shifts to a balance between in-class and in-the-workplace to provide a complete spectrum of training. To successfully change a culture and prepare it to be ready for an unknown future requires leadership at all levels. This leadership needs to be both formal, informal and cross generational. Junior members of the workforce are often too new to affect lasting changes. Similarly, our senior leaders only have a limited time before they leave. That is why the focus of the NGL Program is on developing the program management leadership in the middle. To make the cultural change last, we need to start now, with a decentralized system focused on our mid-tier program managers.

Conclusion

As the 2009 Program Manager Training and Experience study highlighted, the current Air Force method for developing junior to mid-level acquisition program managers is inadequate to prepare them to manage the complexities of today's large acquisition programs.⁴³ NGL is a proposed framework to correct this shortfall. Using the "learn-do-teach" training strategy as a foundation, NGL provides an experiential education and mentorship framework needed within program offices to complete the training and preparation of program managers. It aligns with the Chairman's vision for decentralized execution and the CSAF's vision for improved, state of the art education concepts. It augments the already well-defined and best-in-class training of DAU. Finally, it responds to OSD/AT&L, Frank Kendall's call "that every senior leader consider building a highly professional acquisition workforce that is stronger, more capable, and better able to support the Warfighter as an important and enduring part of his or her legacy."⁴⁴

ENDNOTES

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